

12-13-2007

UNH Faculty Members Score With Education For Volunteer Coaches

Beth Potier

UNH Media Relations

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholars.unh.edu/news>

Recommended Citation

Potier, Beth, "UNH Faculty Members Score With Education For Volunteer Coaches" (2007). *UNH Today*. 913.
<https://scholars.unh.edu/news/913>

This News Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Administrative Offices at University of New Hampshire Scholars' Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Media Relations by an authorized administrator of University of New Hampshire Scholars' Repository. For more information, please contact nicole.hentz@unh.edu.



UNH Faculty Members Score With Education For Volunteer Coaches

CoachSmartNH Used In 30 N.H. Communities

Contact: [Beth Potier](#)
603-862-1566
UNH Media Relations

December 13, 2007

Reporters/editors: Bob Barcelona can be reached at 603-862-1442 or rjb2@unh.edu. Karen Collins can be reached at 602-862-0361 or Karen.collins@unh.edu.

DURHAM, N.H. – Every Saturday morning, legions of volunteer coaches – some two million of them nationwide – take to America’s gyms, fields, rinks and courts to share sportsmanship, skills, and even a little fun with local youth. Many of them will succeed, and their young charges – 52 million in the United States – may pick up a few strategic skills or life lessons among the lost uniforms, upside-down shin pads, and goals scored for the opposing team.

Some, unfortunately, will fail spectacularly, with headline-grabbing stories of abuse, injuries and good coaches gone bad.

Two faculty members at the University of New Hampshire aim to enhance effectiveness – and mitigate risks – for volunteer coaches with an education program called CoachSmartNH. The three-year-old program is now being used in 30 communities in the state, and associate professor of recreation management and policy Bob Barcelona and assistant professor of kinesiology Karen Collins are partnering with New Hampshire communities to enhance coaching effectiveness.

“Our outcome goal is to promote positive experiences for the young athlete,” says Collins. She notes that traumatic stories of coach-athlete violence notwithstanding, a more common side effect of poor coaching is that young athletes drop out or disengage from sport.

“The vast majority of volunteer youth sports coaches have never gone through a coaching education program,” adds Barcelona.

That’s changing, however, and CoachSmartNH puts a local spin on a national trend toward empowering volunteer coaches with education, support, and tools and resources. The program provides extensive training to leaders of recreation departments and other youth sports organizations; those leaders in turn deliver three-hour workshops to volunteer coaches.

While many states have adopted national education programs for their volunteer coaches, CoachSmartNH is tailored to meet the needs and challenges of Granite State coaches. “When we teach the curriculum, we use examples specific to New Hampshire. We know that baseball coaches can’t get outside until April,” says Collins.

Recognized by the New Hampshire Recreation and Park Association as well as the New Hampshire Interscholastic Athletic Association, CoachSmartNH has at its core the development of a coaching philosophy. "Most volunteer coaches don't come in with a coaching philosophy," says Barcelona. "We try to get them to think about it: What are my goals? Why do I coach? What do I want my athletes to get out of this experience?"

Other components of the training – planning, teaching sport skills, and communication and motivation techniques – build on the coaches' articulated philosophies. Collins, whose expertise is in curriculum development, says that planning can give coaches sought-after credibility. "If you know what you're going to do in week two, or week four, you can be that much more confident," she says.

CoachSmartNH takes a "games approach" to practices, teaching via games rather than via drills. "It gets more people involved, it allows them to think and learn while they're playing the game," says Collins.

And as they train coaches throughout the region, Collins and Barcelona are collecting data for research that will continue to inform the program's design. Barcelona is looking at the role of communities in providing positive youth sport experiences, and Collins is examining how confidence in coaching changes with the CoachSmartNH program. "The results of both these studies will inform better management around recreational activities," says Barcelona.

Collins notes that the movement toward better coaching education reflects the changing status of sport – and coaches -- in our society. "Kids are more scheduled and are participating in sport year-round," she says. "Subsequently, coaches are playing a more crucial role in youth development."

For more information on CoachSmartNH, go to www.coachsmart.org.

